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Letters

FREETHOUGHT

Sir,

I think you and your friends deserve to be congratulated for turning out an excellent publication — FREETHOUGHT. We understand of course, that in difficult conditions that we do in Australia. Keep up the good.

Incidentally, we have written to Lavanam at the Atheist Centre, Patamata, advising him and his group to make their paper, 'The Atheist' more interesting one. They concentrate too much on their founder, who is being turned into a Secular Saint! Atheism should not be made a cult of!

—Ron Marke,
Honorary Literature Secretary,
Rationalist Association of
NSW, Australia.

* * * *

Sir,

I have just now received a copy of your highly esteemed rationalist monthly "FREETHOUGHT" for which I am very much thankful to you. Your magazine has impressed me very much. It is exactly the thing which I had been seeking since a very long time. Though in the midst of highly superstitious, religious and orthodox people, devoid of any sound reasoning, I am a freethinker and hold rationalistic views from my very early life; and I had not the slightest idea that an association of rationalists, like that of yours, existed anywhere. I am, therefore, greatly indebted to Mr. K. Thankappan of Bombay who kindly gave me the address of your Association.

I thank you very much for your whole hearted devotion to the noble cause of enlightening the mass and wish you every

success in your struggle against the ignorance of man. I have firm belief in the ultimate triumph of rationalism and your untiring efforts are sure to be rewarded either today or tomorrow.

Jyotish Chandra Prasad Verma,
Partapur (Bihar).

* * * *

Sir,

Really FREETHOUGHT encourages rationalism and helps people to escape from mental slavery. Liberation of mind excites us to break away from superstition. Superstition causes misery. And FREETHOUGHT gives mental peace and encourages us to solve the problems of human life by human means, instead of submission to supernatural beings.

—Shafiqur Rahman,
Dacca (Bangla Desh)

* * * *

Sir,

A ray of Rationalism dormant in me since long unexpressed found its expression with full throated ease by a supporting magazine like FREETHOUGHT which emits its rays of full awareness of the world whose people are found in darkness believing in theology rather than man and his duty to attain perfection.

Hence I am very happy to donate Rs. 10 along with my student membership fee of Rs. 9 for the year 1979.

—M. G. Prabhakar, Kolar.

* * * *

Sir,

Recently, I fortunately came across your monthly journal FREETHOUGHT. And I am very much influenced by your journal. I could not resist my temptation to be one of your subscribers.

—C. V. Ramachandran, Trivandrum.

"All religions die of one disease—that of being found out".

—John Morley
(English Statesman
and Historian)

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FreeThought

WINDS OF CHANGE IN IRAN

Recent events in Iran portend to be of world-wide significance. The fall of the despotic monarchy led by the 'Aryamehr' Shah was expected, though perhaps not so soon and not at the pace at which his opposition gained momentum amidst tremendous popular support and enthusiasm.

Monarchy—that vestigeous institution of power, corruption and oppression—has been overrun by the people. It is an oft-quoted remark that absolute power corrupts absolutely. The misdeeds of the Shah and the inhuman atrocities of his secret military police Savak are well known. Few will sympathise with the Shah—perhaps not even the Blitz editor Russei Karanjia who once sang paeans to the imperialist ally and was deservedly rewarded. What are the immediate problems facing Iran?

Amidst shouts of 'Khuda, Koran, Khomeini', the man on the street is in a smug feeling of elation and euphoria at the moment. They will soon be starting at realities in order to charter a democratic course. Iran's oil resources will no more be used for imperialist exploitation.

What are Khomeini's men like? Is their concern for an 'Islamic State' merely a synonym for an anti-Shah democratic government or is it a pathological obsession with theistic Shariat rule? Ayatollah Khomeini, the patriarch of Iran's Shiite Muslims has

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Reader's Forum

THE MOTHER RETURNS TO AUROVILLE ?

Apropos Ms. Sudha's article in the January number, the following story will interest readers. It was carried by *India Today* in October and tells of the appearance of a 16-year-old domestic servant of a certain B. Venkat Reddy who claims that she shows "symptoms of Mother's reincarnation."

Born in Nalgonda district of Andhra Pradesh in 1961, Kamala was bonded to Venkat Reddy, a rich farmer of her village in whose service she remains. Interestingly Reddy was an ashramite until 1974 when he was sent out "for wanting to serve God and Mammon at the same time." Early this year he returned to Pondicherry and took up residence in the vicinity of the Ashram with the teenage Kamala.

In March, according to stories put out by Reddy, Kamala underwent a mystical experience: "Forces like white clouds, changing into blue and then golden kept moving about continuously for 19 days when knowledge, light, power, ananda and peace descended like a flood."

Uneducated and speaking only Telugu, Kamala now claims she can understand any language with her soul. But her mind cannot put it into spoken words. She claims that the Mother has entrusted to her the task of "transforming earth consciousness" in which she is assisted by Sri Aurobindo 'sending light from the supramental plane.'

The Sri Aurobindo Research Academy in Pondicherry is skeptical and put her through some gruelling sessions of questions. But

since she understands only Telugu, Venkat Reddy and a certain Adilakshmi, both well-versed in the ashram jargon, translated her answers.

During the course of the interview Kamala said she had a vision of the Mother working in a vast field of "earth consciousness." It was a cleansing operation and one-fourth of the job was complete. The remaining three-fourths has been entrusted to her.

Q: Do you feel the presence of Mother and Sri Aurobindo always?

A: Always.

Q: How do you know that they are the Mother and Sri Aurobindo?

A: They themselves introduced me to them.

Q: How does Sri Aurobindo look like?

A: He is serene and tranquil like a mountain. He rarely smiles.

Q: How does the Mother look like? Any resemblance to her photographs?

A: No, she is more powerful, energetic and illumined. She is very young.

Q: The Ashram is beset with problems lately. What is your opinion?

A: It is because there is no total surrender.

Q: What about Auroville?

A: The light is descending more and more, so the dark forces are attacking more.

Q: Can you give light, knowledge, peace and bliss to others?

A: If they are ready to receive them, then I can give.

Kamala, alias Meera, now gives darshan regularly and ashramites, deprived of the Mother and her messages, find her an ideal substitute. Mary Aldridge, a British ashra-

mite was given a special message when she got derailed in her sadhana. "You love parmatma. You ask the Lord for Shakti and pray to God to overcome your difficulties," she was told, and was put back on the path of spiritual progress.

In August, Kamala gave darshan to a growing band of devotees in Pondicherry and handed out this message: "Pranamas to the respected elders, Mahakali give Thy shakti. Mahasaraswati give Thy knowledge. Mahalakshmi sprinkle money in the world. The world is waiting for the riches."

With a multi-million rupee institution left searching still for another spiritual head there are undoubtedly people "waiting for the riches." If Kamala can be successfully projected as a reincarnation of the Mother, her promoters Venkat Reddy and Adilakshmi are indeed playing for high stakes.

M. R. B.



I am very happy to learn that Mr. P. Menoharan (Letter in October 78 issue) has curiosity to know more about rationalism. He would certainly get guidance from IRA. But I wish to caution him against sentimentalism. Please do not call Dr. Kovoov, a master. We have to learn from him to stand on our own legs. Rationalism is no cult of Dr. Kovoov.

I fully agree with Mr. Vijaykumar (letter in Oct 78 issue) that Freethought needs publicity. I have also come to know about rationalism as an organised movement, at the age of 45, only by an accident. It was also not easy to procure the address of IRA. But I must say that it was the prompt and warm reply from Mr. Suryanarayana, that admitted me in the movement without loss of time. All those who consider spread of rationalism as their moral duty, must keep in mind the importance of personal letters in winning over people.

I propose that IRA should have a planned programme of publicity. The target should be to reach a stage of publicity due to which every student in school and college would be required to write a note on rationalism as he/she is required to do on communism nationalism etc. No matter even if it is for a few marks. Time is coming when disillusioned young men would look for a non-conforming Philosophy that would make their life meaningful and intense. The blame would be ours, if we can't look after them.

MUKUND,
Shillong.

(Continued on Page 67)

no claims to a secular outlook of a Kemal Ataturk but has indicated passing of laws similar to those in Saudi Arabia. Dr. Bazahgan whom he has chosen to lead Iran as the premier, however, can be expected to exert a moderating influence. A scientist by training, his attachment to religious Islamic teachings is combined with leftist leanings. In 1961 Dr. Bazangan dared the mullahs in founding the Iran Liberation Movement which incidentally gives women the same status as men. Among the other key ministers is Mr. Javadi, a long time human rights activist.

Another hopeful feature is the participation of National Front leaders in the Cabinet. The National Front includes intellectuals and leftists of varying hue. Though it was with Khomeini in the Anti-Shah protest movement it is ideologically far from the mullahs. The front leader, Karim Sanjabi is the new foreign minister. Another leading National Front figure Mr Forouhan is the labour minister.

The rationalists can feel happy at the fall of another citadel of obscurantism and reaction and feel hopeful that the progressive and secular elements in the Khomeini Cabinet will give Iran a stable and purposeful rule without allowing Teheran to be over-run by Pan-Islamic activists.

NEWS AND NOTES

MR. LOKHANDWALA FELICITATED

Mr. Y. A. Lokhandwala was felicitated on 28—1—79 under the presidentship of Shri Ishwarlal L. Sheth on his election as President of Indian Rationalist Association. A special function for this purpose was got up at Nandi Cinema, Bombay under the auspices of Panchmahals Development Co-operative Society Ltd., Bombay.

The function was followed by a special screening of the film 'Balika Badhu'.

* * * *

I. R. A. FILES WRIT

On 21—12—79 IRA filed a writ petition in the Andhra Pradesh High Court against the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) for the release of the scientific display material confiscated by NCERT. The writ petition has been admitted. Mr K. G. Kannabiran, a staunch fighter for Civil Liberties appeared on behalf of I. R. A.

This is the first time that IRA has filed a writ in order to fight for the promotion of Scientific Education among the people. The full details of the case will be published in the next issue.

* * * *

K. R. A.

Kerala Rationalist Association has unanimously passed the following resolution in its State Committee Meeting held at Trichur on 10—12—78 under the presidentship of Com. Pavanam, Secretary, Kerala Sahithya Academy.

* * * *

RESOLUTIONS

It is with deep regret that we understand that Ms. Soma Sublok one of the members of Indian Rationalist Association, has been prosecuted by your administration for writing an article on "Soul and Rebirth" in Hindi journal 'Sarita'.

It is painful to note that in our country a citizen is denied the freedom of expressing his/her own opinions on subjects like soul & rebirth. It is also distressing to find that people are being prevented from discharging their fundamental duties especially as to the promotion of scientific temper, spirit of enquiry, humanism and reform.

As we all know the concept of soul and rebirth do not stand to reason, speaking out the truth should not be punishable under any law. We therefore, earnestly request your goodself to intervene in the matter and instruct all concerned to drop the proposed prosecution proceedings against Ms. Soma Sublok.

Yours sincerely,

(Sd)

General Secretary.

* * * *

M. P. RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION

The Annual General Body Meeting of Madhya Pradesh Rationalist Association was held on 28—1—79. A good number of members participated in the lively discussions

on how to spread Rationalism and what assistance can be given to the needy.

All the members re-dedicated themselves to the cause of Rationalism and humanism and recalled the activities of the Association during the year 1978 towards this direction, such as the Seminar on Rationalism conducted on 22-10-1978, the useful study picnic arranged for the benefit of family members and children to inculcate scientific thinking amongst them etc.

The General Body was very much pleased with the fellow Rationalists from Jamul Cement Works, Jamul, for their enthusiasm and active participation in all the activities.

The members praised the hard work done by Mr. S.V.S. Nair in connection with the circulation of Rationalistic journals such as Freethought and Uktuvicharam.

The General Body then elected the following office bearers for the year 1979 :

President	...	Mr. I. George
Vice-President	...	Mr. Nepolian
General Secretary		Mr. P. K. K. Nair
Jt. Secretary	...	Mr. B. Parameswaran
Treasurer	...	Mr. K. N. Pillai
Members	...	Messrs. Mathukutty
		S. V. S. Nair
		V. Varghese
		N. Vasupillai
		N. K. Narayanan
		T. Ashok Kumar
		A. Khadar
		N. Balakrishnan and
		Dr. T. Varghese.

* * * *

THEFT IN BESANT NAGARS TEMPLE

The "thali" of the Amman in Ratnagiriswarar temple, in Besant Nagar, Madras was stolen as also some pooja articles.

In Varasiddhi Vinayagar temple in the same area, the brass 'kuthuvilakku' and temple bell were stolen.

The present police force in Adyar is insufficient to deal with crimes in the adjacent Besant nagar, Sastri nagar and Indira nagar. Thefts occur in temples even during day time, the residents say.

—Indian Express dt. 17-1-79

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KOLAR RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION

A meeting was convened on 15-1-79 to mourn Dr. Kovoor's death. Messrs. H. G. Sanna Guddaiah and N. B. Chandra Mohan (Lecturers) addressed the gathering.

A Rationalist magazine "Samatha" published by "Manavatha Vedika" Government College, Kolar was released in the memory of Dr. Kovoor.

* * * *

RENT CONTROL ACT

The Supreme Court to-day stayed the operation of the Tamil Nadu Government's notification exempting buildings owned by Hindu, Christian and Muslim religious, public and charitable trusts from the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Building (Lease and Rent Control) Act of 1960.

The notification concerned had been issued on August 16, 1976, in supersession of another dated August 12, 1974.

Mr. Syed Mehood, a tenant for several decades of a small shop belonging to the

Roman Catholic mission in Manaparai in Thiruvananthapuram, contended in a writ petition that the Government notification violated Article 14 of the Constitution on the ground that no distinction could be made between tenants of public religious and charitable institutions and other tenants.

Hindu, 16—12—78

* * * *

BLACK AND WHITE

There is always at least one black in the American television series. It is a must, considering that the Blacks account for 11 per cent of the country's population. And how many elective posts do they hold? According to recently published statistics, less than 1 per cent.

—New Times Feb. 79

* * * *

4 SABARIMALA PILGRIMS KILLED IN TWO BUS MISHAPS

Mr. Ramachandran, an employee of the Coimbatore branch of the LIC and a pilgrim to Sabarimala, was killed and nearly 70 persons were injured when two fast passenger buses of Kerala Road Transport Corporation collided head-on at Vashapally near Changanacherry, about 20 km from Kottayam on the afternoon of 11th Jan. '79.

While 16 of the injured have been taken to the Kottayam medical college hospital, ten have been admitted to hospital, in Changanacherry. The condition of two admitted to the medical college hospital, was stated to be serious.

In another accident, three persons, including a woman, were killed and 16 injured when a private bus carrying pilgrims to Sabarimala from Bangalore and a fast

passenger bus of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation collided at Perambra, near Chalakudy on 11th Jan. '79.

Of the dead, Inderan and Rajamma were pilgrims from Bangalore and Johny Kundukulam was a passenger of the KSRTC bus.

Of the injured 13 have been admitted to the Trichur district hospital and three at the Chalakudy hospital.

Mr. KCV Chandy, son of KICC (I) president, K. M. Chandy is among those admitted to the district hospital.

(IE dt. 12—1—79)

* * * *

"MIRACLE MAN" JAILED FOR CHEATING

A self-proclaimed "miracle man" was sentenced to two months rigorous imprisonment for cheating a desperate father and depriving him of his daughter's dowry amounting to 34,500 rupees.

The chief judicial magistrate of Kottayam, Mr. P. B. Chellappan who passed the sentence, also ordered the "miracle man" to pay a fine of Rs. 1 000.

According to the prosecution, the father, Thomas, was hoodwinked by the miracle-worker, popularly known as "Nattakim Siddhan" into believing that his daughter was not getting married because of divine wrath.

The "Siddhan" suggested that the father should part with the dowry towards performing pujas after which, it would be returned to him. The currency bundle was returned after the puja on condition that the bundle should be opened only after fixing the wedding.

Months passed without any proposal materialising and the disappointed father then opened the bundle only to find pieces of paper. A case of cheating was registered against the miracle man.

— "Times of India"

* * * *

OLD CUSTOMS CHECK THE ADVANCE OF INDIAN WOMEN

At a state-level seminar on "Women and Development" held in Delhi in January the opinion expressed by virtually every speaker was that age-old customs and prejudice continue to affect the position of women in a tradition-bound society like India's.

It was also observed that social constraints continued to affect the lives of women in almost every sphere of human activity—education, health and employment.

A large number of women continue to die of "avoidable complications of pregnancy" said Dr. O. P. Sharma, Director of the Delhi administration health services. This was due to a general lack of health awareness among women. But a social change was reflected in two areas—more women than men used various medical institutions, and more men than women had undergone sterilisation.

In education the state was offering more educational facilities for women but social factors held them back. Dr. (Mrs.) Nanda, additional Director of Education pointed out: "There is a little change in the attitude of parents in respect of girls studying in primary co educational schools. But they continue to appose the idea of girls studying with boys in secondary schools."

Enrolment of girls in rural-based schools was less than half that of boys. Parents still tended to withdraw their children at the "slightest pretext."

Mrs. Shailaja Chandra, Director of training and technical training said: "The main drawback for women in finding suitable jobs is the general social atmosphere prevailing in the present market. The female candidates, even now, do not have the freedom of movement allowed to males. The attitude of society is that they must care for and supervise women. This is a social hindrance in developing self-confidence in women."

— Times of India"

* * * *

EVE CASTE OFF TRADITIONAL TENETS IN CENTRAL ASIA :

The veil is gone and the mask of silence imposed for centuries on the women of Central Asia has disappeared. A demand for dowry is a crime, punishable by up to three years in prison, and the universities are populated by a new breed of women seeking a professional life beyond the reach of the ancient Islamic traditions of inequality.

It has been slightly more than 50 years since the Bolsheviks managed to extend their rule and their creed of women's emancipation into this region of feuding tribal chieftains, and khans, who had been allowed to remain in power under the Czars.

Bibi Palvanova is a product of the changes that the revolution ushered in. Her field was history and her thesis on the liberation of women in Soviet Central Asia.

"Before the revolution, the Koran regulated the position of women in society." But now, she pointed out, women make up nearly half of the student population in higher education. Still "there are vestiges of the past. We don't hide them. There are still cases of parents not wanting daughters to receive higher education. There are still isolated cases of selling brides, and people are prosecuted for it."

—David K. Shipler.

Two Instances Without Comments

—Mukund

It happened when I was an examiner at the B.Ed. level. A particular teacher was giving his final lesson in history-teaching. The topic was Islamic Invasions on India. His performance was no good; yet that was somehow tolerated. But after narrating the atrocities of the invaders, he put a suggestive question to the entire class. "Is a Muslim ever good?", he asked pointing out at various pupils turn by turn. "No, Sir", "No, Sir" quick came the replies. At this, I wanted to intervene, but I simply left the class to avoid an unpleasant scene.

Then I called the teacher aside and told him that what he did was no history teaching at all. The surprised teacher failed to understand his fault. When explained, he smiled without regrets. I tried to cut him down to size by quoting varied examples from history. He listened to me patiently but politely said, "Sir, you are a learned man. But as a common teacher my duty is to teach the pupil whatever I have learnt. And in my life I have learnt that Muslims are never good."

I could have failed the teacher in the exam. But it was no solution. He was an old man of 53, and wanted the degree for some benefit in the pension. On that account, he enjoyed everybody's sympathy. Disturbed in the mind, I spoke about this, to my colleagues. Nobody felt anything about it. On the contrary, one of them said, "Do you know how the Muslim teachers teach history? They simply spread anti-Hindu feelings." Another spoke, "Why are you worried about the poor old man. After all, he will retire soon."

Later, I had an occasion to act as an expert in a Selection Board for interviewing teacher candidates. The other members were quite high-ranking men. Somehow, it so happened that one Muslim candidate proved better than all others. Obviously, I gave him No. 1. But in our final discussions, the Chairman of the Board said, "Frankly speaking, for history teaching I do not prefer Muslims. It is better to avoid them, if possible. I know what feelings they spread." I said, "That could be true, but here the candidate concerned has answered all the questions correctly, whereas others cut sorry figures. The Chairman was sensible and did not want to impose his will. All probably wanted me to do something but I kept quiet. Then one member suggested, 'Why not call the candidate again and put him such questions as would expose his attitudes?'" In fact, my questions were all concerning approach and attitudes, rather than information. But all agreed and he was called again and interrogated in various ways. Again he proved equal to the occasion, in spite of nervousness. He was finally selected. △

HIGHLIGHTS OF APRIL ISSUE

Darwinism—Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.

—Prof. J. C. B. Abraham

Christianity, a matter of faith.

—Prem K. Sahil

What is Rationalism?

—A. Suryanarayana

The Vacuum Argument Myth, Mystery or Fact?

P. K. Narayanan

(Cont. from January Issue)

ROOTS OF HUMAN NATURE : Unconditioned reflexes or inborn nerve connections are capable of ensuring only bare subsistence of the organism. The equilibration attained through the unconditioned reflexes is of worth before the question of existence only when there is absolute constancy in the external environment.

As a result, the unconditioned reflexes require supplementation by conditioned reflexes. Conditioned reflexes are temporary nerve connections formed in the highest parts of the central nervous system, on the basis of existing unconditioned reflexes. They are responsible for the organism's varied functions fulfilling the roll of complete adaptability and equilibration of the organism with the environment.

This is about the case of animals. What about man? If man remained at the stage of lower animals, his existence would have well been guarded and the species' safety would have been preserved with the help of instinctive unconditioned nerve connection along with a set of newly

formed conditioned reflexes as in the case of lower animals.

But man the homosapien, had far advanced in the ladder of evolution, thereby making his environment exceedingly complex. He had become a social animal and had added 'social environment' to the already prevailing biological, geographical, geophysical and cosmic environments which are common to man and animals alike. Hence the problem of equilibration has also become most complex

In the remotest past, probably human beings would have satisfied and survived the urge for food, with the food available in nature. But with the progress of civilisation innumerable complexities have cropped up to interfere with the very same allmentary requirements. These varied requirements helped in the formation of temporary nerve connections in order to secure adequate food.

Likewise, any social phenomenon generally referred to as human nature can be explained in terms of conditioned reflexes. Take for example a complex social phenomenon called 'tact'. Tact means an 'ability to create for oneself a favourable standing in society, the quality to be able to establish with everyone and in any circumstance relations that constantly evoke a generally favourable attitude'. According to Dr. Pavlov, tact is the result of conditioned reflexes formed by combinations derived from all manner of actions or impressions taking place in the social arena and arriving from or through letters written, words spoken and gesticulations displayed.

How is a conditioned reflex established in the cerebral cortex? The experiments conducted by Ivan Petrovich Pavlov are as follows :

Generally speaking, the basic condition for the formation of a conditioned reflex is a single or repeated coincidence of stimulus with an already existing unconditioned reflex or a strongly established conditioned reflex itself. The process of formation of conditioned reflex would be quickest without difficulties when the repetition of the stimulus is directly preceded by one another.

The stimuli emanating from various sources in the environment reach the cerebral hemispheres by way of 'signals'. There are two types of signal systems namely, the first signal system which both the animals as well as human beings possess and the second signal system which is the exclusive possession of human brain.

Dog, man's companion and friend was used by Pavlov for his experiments on digestion and higher nervous activity. Food or acid is introduced into the mouth of the dog. The dog immediately reacts by beginning to chew the food or spitting out the acid. Whatever be the reaction, invariably saliva is secreted in the dog's mouth but its quantity and quality depend on the nature of the substance which is introduced into its mouth.

The nerve endings in the dog's mouth get irritated depending on the quality of the food introduced and the consequent excitation is conducted to the salivary centre in the medulla. It is as a result of the excitation of the salivary centre that saliva is secreted in the mouth. The reaction of the salivary centre and the consequent flow of saliva are governed by permanent nerve connections already established in the cerebral hemispheres and are therefore called unconditioned reflexes.

Is there, then, any condition by which a salivary secretion can be produced in the

dog's mouth in the absence of the unconditioned reflex? Pavlov proved that there are temporary nerve connections which can cause necessary excitation in the salivary centre and produce salivary secretion. Formation of such a conditioned reflex can be seen in the following experiment:

The intake of food calls forth an unconditioned food reflex and secretion of saliva in the dog's mouth. Suppose that just before the introduction of food a certain stimulation is produced in either of the senses of the dog, say for example, an electric light is switched on before its eyes or the sound of a bell is introduced within the range of its hearing. If the combination of this stimulus is repeated several times, a temporary nerve connection that is a conditioned reflex is formed in the cerebral cortex of the animal which begins to cause flow of saliva. In the experiment, mere sight of the light or sound of the metronome, as the case may be, evokes excitation in the salivary centre and as a result, even if no food is introduced, the dog starts salivating, producing the same quality of saliva as was produced when food was given.

In this case, a conditioned food reflex has developed on the basis of an already existing unconditioned food reflex. Likewise tens of thousands of conditioned reflexes are formed.

TWO SIGNAL SYSTEMS:

An understanding of the two signal systems about which a reference was made earlier, is of importance. The following quotation will sufficiently clarify the working of the two signal systems:

..... Let us compare the digestive reflex activity of man and of dogs, see what evokes food reaction in them, what are the signals for these reactions? Let us suppose that a

man and a dog both became hungry and are taking food, the master is sitting at a properly set table, while his dog is feeding from a dish in a corner. We shall not consider the difference in the food itself, in its preparation or the condition and surroundings in which it is taken, it will then be seen that what the dog and the master have in common is the secretion of various digestive juices on the basis of unconditioned reflex activity of the nervous system. Thus in general, the digestive juices will be secreted by both man and dog on the basis of a common neutral mechanism. If they are hungry, when they see in a shop window various foods or smell of food that is being prepared in the kitchen. This neural mechanism is already a conditioned reflex activity in which the first signal systems common to man and animals, participates. The secretion of digestive juice is evoked by the sight and smell of food received by the optical and olfactory organs of both man and dog. Now let us assume that a hungry man is walking along a street with his hungry dog meets an acquaintance and stops for a chat. What happens if this acquaintance begins a story relishing all the details of the wonderful supper he had last night? How does the hungry man and his hungry dog react to this story? It is clear that only the man will become hungrier, and will secrete digestive juices—'his mouth will water'. The dog standing nearby will not react in any way to the talk. The food signals being presented in the form of speech calls forth for no reflexes in the dog. Word signals, as signals of signals, do not reach the food centres in the dog's brain, as dogs, in distinction from man, possess no second signal system....." (page 27, *Sleep Hypnosis and Dreams*, Foreign Publishing House, Moscow).

Thus, in man, the stimuli from the environment reach the cerebral hemispheres through the first signal system (of hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch) and the second

signal system (of words, written or spoken). The human brain has therefore to react to the additional stimuli arriving through the second signal system, which has made man of what he is, resulting in the formation of the most complex conditioned reflexes. This accounts for the peculiarities of human nature, human behaviour and attitude and in short, human intellect in distinction from lower animals.

SEXUAL INSTINCT:

To illustrate the complexity of the reflex activity in man, consider the very same procreational urge called sexual instinct in its application with reference to animals and man.

It is common knowledge as to how gesticulations, smell, sounds etc., of the opposite sex evoke sexual emotions in both men and the animals, in their own peculiar ways. These emotions present conditions leading to volitional acts in man and the animals which end up in sex acts.

But in the specific instance, take the case of man who is endowed with the advantage of second signal system over the animals which could develop only the first signal system. In addition to the mode of communication by the first signal system such as beckoning through gesticulation and winks etc., man can also express his emotions and feelings and convey his desires through chosen words either by speech or in writing.

The emotion of 'love' expressed through the twinkling eyes of a loving miss stimulates the cerebral centre of her love, but added to this when the lovely one utters also the word, 'I love you'—the intensity of the message and the reaction of the sensory centres in the cerebral hemispheres assume imaginable heights!

Thus it explains the difference between animals and men with reference to the emotional and volitional processes and it illustrates the importance of second signal system in the process of evolving human race. △

In Search of an Alternative Identity

By Mrs. Margaret Bhatti

The right to dissent we regard as most basic to freedom of conscience where our choices as individuals should not be dictated by the kind of social pressures which weigh down every other aspect of our living. Yet, as every Indian atheist is aware, in a heavily regimented society such as ours, any departure from the norm appears to antagonise and alienate. Our very motives are suspect because these norms are rooted in dogma with rigid social conventions authorised by religion.

Indeed, so pervasive is the Hindu value-system that every Indian of every community outside it finds himself clearly defined within his own religious context along with his language and regional culture. In short, we are not people but products, labelled and stamped with supposedly recognisable characteristics of the communities from which we come. So strong a hold do these definitions have on our minds that certain rationalists are embarrassed because they must function under names which stand for titles like the Creator of the World, or Lord of the Universe—names which place them

squarely within a strongly defined religious class. I wonder if atheists in any other part of the world are confronted by such a ludicrous dilemma.

Communal clichés are comfortable to live with because they make no demands on our judgement and intelligence. So we take Muslims for Muslim, Hindus for Hindu, Christians for Christian, and so on, never stopping to think that people are persons with distinct and individual character traits. As a result Indian society abounds in stereotypes with each strongly conditioned to think, feel, and behave in a predictable and conventional manner. This kind of rigidity is the outcome of the Hindu concept of caste dharma where unquestioning obedience to one's duty is implicit for every member—a concept to which we must ascribe much of our third-rateness in terms of creativity and self-expression because it successfully stifles independent thinking.

I have sometimes had small pupils ask me: "What caste are you?" (and been met by blank disbelief when I replied: "I am no caste. I am no caste. I'm a human being.")

They are confused that there are no "god-pictures" in my home, and puzzled about my true identity as a member of Indian society, for even my name appears as a strange kind of mix. But how can you be **nothing**?" they demand.

One is aware while dealing with young minds how strongly their attitudes are conditioned by parental influences: Like the adults in their homes, they also evaluate their teachers and fellow-students on a basis of communal clichés and false notions pre-conceived within their backgrounds. This contamination accounts for their intolerance and they go through life denying personhood to others if they fail

to measure up to those pre-conceived standards. To them names are not merely necessary, they are significant: they are labels which presumably tell all about the person who bear them.

As a writer for children I am constantly confronted by a need to present alternatives which can be more meaningful than such out-worn clichés-alternatives which will help young readers think their way into adulthood instead of merely growing up.

One of the novels I wrote recently for children is entitled *Who Has Seen the Wishing-Tree?* and tells of a search for the mythical kalpa-vriksha by two little girls, Roma and Rima, along with their friend a koel called Kokilkawa. The children are identical twins but as one of them says: "I know I'm Roma, because I feel Roma, and Rima knows she's Rima because she feels Rima. Others get us mixed-up, but we never get ourselves mixed-up."

However, the poor koel is very mixed-up, for he feels neither koel nor crow—hence he carries this hybrid neither-here-nor-there kind of name standing for both crow and koel. This is because he has been strangely conditioned from his early fledgling days. After the fashion of Indian koels, his mother laid her egg in a crow's nest and he was brought up by his foster crow-mother. Not only was she very good to him so that he grew to love her, he soon became imprinted with the belief that he was a crow, like her. However, when he went out into the world he discovered that the crows would not accept him even though he could sing like them, while he himself was not comfortable with the koels even though he looked like them. He is therefore anxious to find the Wishing-Tree so that he can

get over this crisis of identity" by wishing crow, or wishing koel, thereby putting himself comfortably into a recognisable and acceptable bird-class.

After certain interesting and meaningful adventures the three of them return home without finding the Wishing-Tree. But in the process of searching they have found out certain things about themselves because "travel helps you look in on yourself from the outside." Kokilkawa discovers that living up to a label is not the best alternative after all: "It's what you think and feel, and what you do with that think and feel that ought to decide what you are." He sees that in being able to relate to both crow and koel he is, in fact, a rather unique kind of bird, and resolves to treat this as an asset and not a liability.

He is warned that this will not be easy—a warning given him by the original crow from Aesop's fable who was severely punished because he tried to pass as a peacock by sticking feathers all over him. They will never allow it, say this crow—"They" standing for collective opinion. They will not only peck him and pull out his tail feathers. They will even make it impossible for him to live.

GOLD 'BRA' IN HUNDI

A gold "brassiere" was found in the hundi of the Krishna temple in Guruvayur when it was opened after the Ekadasi festival in Dec. '78, according to devaswom authorities.

Let us hope it does not provoke a quarrel between Rukmini and Satyabama!

However, Kokilkawa has made up his mind. "I have a right to be different," he replies stoutly. "I am going to be the first koel who ever reached out to the crows and the first crow who ever reached out to the koels."

None of them regret not finding the Wishing-Tree. for as a wise old scholar in the story says in conclusion: "There are some things in life for which the searching is much more rewarding than the finding—and that's the way it is with Wishing-Trees."

The theme of the book demonstrates clearly that the alternative is not "nothingness" when we choose to break obsolete and unworkable rules and exercise our right to be different. I have no doubt that fellow-rationalists reading this article recognise here their own personal dilemma.

Most people regard atheism as a cynical and flippant rejection of god as a myth not even worth considering. It is much more because it involves a search for an alternative identity—a valid and a worthwhile one. It demands a continuing process of introspection in which one must sift through a great mass of data handed us through our parentage. We must constantly question hitherto accepted values in order to arrive at others which do not offend our new-found spirit of humanism. How simple it would be if truth could indeed be arrived at only by a simple process of active dissent!

The Wishing-Tree is, in a sense, a kind of ideal for which we all hope, and it is right and proper that we never find it, for then there would be no meaning left to our searching. △

Talaq! Talaq!! Talaq!!!

(When Will our Muslim women be Conferred the rights that their counterparts professing other religions enjoy? This Poem is dedicated to the memory of the late Hamid Dalwari, a valiant crusader against the inequitous muslim personal law—Author)

The mendicant meanders
through the merry makers
asking for alms
her languid eyes quiver
expectant
her cheeks furrowed by age
that once rouged in bloom.
The shadow of her yesteryears
stretching like a hideous dream
have bedumbed thoughts of
future.

Yesteryears
will sing paeans of penury
her limbs had froze on
pavements
weathering many winters.
Yesteryears
have seen the bark of street dogs
stings of strangers
lecherous louts
like tipsy ticks, drawing blood
from the sores of society.

Yesteryears
their memories will stalk her future
before engulfing it
she will then fade into the
limbo of oblivion.

It all began
when her man cast her away
in a unilateral denouncement
with the triple-pronouncement
"Talaq-Talaq-Talaq!"

V. GOPALAKRISHNAN

Ramayana-The Unethical Epic

The Ramayana is held in great esteem by millions of traditional Hindus who know only to swear by or worship the books and are not in the habit of studying them. In this regard, we must note that the degree of worship varies according to the age of the book. Greater antiquity renders the book awe inspiring and worthy of reverence. The Ramayana is considered 'older' in the conservative Hindu camp. It is a pity that a majority of otherwise well-educated young boys and girls, join hands with traditionality in matters of worshipping books, euphemistically named shastras.

I am not in favour of worshipping the books in any form. There may be some books appealing to our mind; we can study and benefit from them without worshipping or swearing by them. But if without knowing the contents of a particular book, we go on respecting it, not to speak of worshipping, it is the height of irrationality.

Let us try to know the contents of the Ramayana and then re-evaluate it and see whether it is really worth the respect accorded to it.

UNNATURAL ELEMENT: The main characters of the Ramayana were born in an unnatural way. Sita took birth from the field like a plant (Balakanda 66/14) Rama and his brothers were born after their mothers had eaten the Payasa handed over to them at the end of a sacrifice by a person said to have been born from the sacrificial fire (Balakanda, Ch. 14 to 16).

About a Rakshasa character namely Kumbhakarna, the Ramayana, says that when he was just an infant, he swallowed thousands of people (Ramayana 6/61/12-14).

There is another yarn artfully spun wherein it is stated that the great Vindhya mountain grew so tall and high that it threatened the very progress of the sun! Saint Agastya on being supplicated by the Rishis promised to stop the growth of the presumptuous mountain and thus to prevent the happening of such a calamity. He presented himself before the mountain. It fell prostrate before him in reverence. Agastya asked 'him' to remain in that position till he returned. But he did not return and the mountain lies prostrate awaiting the return of the great sage (Aaranya kanda, 11/81-85).

Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, singly kills 14000 Rakshasas of dreadful deeds within a short period of nearly ten minutes (Aranya kanda 30/30-31) Hanuman jumps over the sea which is no less than 800 miles in breadth (Sundara kanda Chapter 1) and swallows up the sun like a boiled egg (Uttara kanda Chapter 35).

Sita throws herself on the pile of burning wood to prove her purity but the fire god brings her unscathed out of the burning pile and tells Rama that she is pure as well as sinless (Yudha kanda chapter 118).

Sage Gotama curses his wife and she is turned into an idol made of stone (Balakanda, ch 48).

ASTRONOMICAL NUMBERS:

Rama is said to have reigned for 11000 years, Dasharata is mentioned to have reigned for 60,000 years (Ramayana 1/1/97). A person of 5000 years old, is mentioned as a child who has not yet attained boyhood (Uttarakanda 73/5).

POLYGAMY: In Ramayana the so called incarnation of the imaginary god and the father of the incarnation are depicted as having hundreds of wives which is against the much advertised Hindu doctrine of 'Loyalty of one husband to one wife and vice versa'. Dasharatha had 333 wives (Ayodhya kanda, chapter 39) Rama had many wives and concubines (uttara kanda verse 22).

WINE WOMEN AND FLESH: The traditional Hindus say that "wine and flesh" are condemnable in Hinduism. While expressing cynical remarks against the materialistic progress of the modern world, these Hindus say the world of today is heading towards destruction, for, the people are not spiritualistic enough but are votaries of three W's. It is a little wonder to note that Rama the "ideal purusha" of the Ramayana, is more like 'a cursed modern young boy' than a deity to be worshiped. Here is the next:

'There were fine quilts spread in the garden. Rama served pure wines to Sita just as God Indra offers wines to Shadhi, his wife. The servants brought many kinds of meat and fruit. Many dancers and singers came. They danced and sang. Generous hearted and most beautiful women who were adept in the art of singing and dancing, came and drank wine and danced. Ram who knows how to please everyone, indulged in those women" (Uttarakanda 18-22).

IMMORAL GODS: Hindu religion condemns theft, adultery and rape. But in the Ramayana, there are gods like Indra, Vayu and Moon who commit theft, adultery, rape and murder (Balakanda chapters 39, 48, 25 and Kishkindha kanda, Chapter 66). A few of their females used to come to this world to seduce men.

CASTEISM: The Ramayana preaches casteism which is condemned thought only verbally, by the majority of Hindus today. Many a sub-rule of caste-consideration are violated daily by the traditional as well as "modern" Hindus yet they worship (the book which is in favour of following the caste rules strictly. These rules were nothing but the rule of Brahmanas. So, the Brahmanas were "Bhoo Devas" (earthly gods).

Sages conversant with the shastras say that a Brahmana is exempt from punishment [Uttarakanda, chapter 71].

The shudras were treated in a very inhuman way. Shambhuka, a sage of shudra caste, was beheaded by Rama simply because he was worshipping god and practising penance (uttarakanda).

UNTOUCHABILITY: Before the departure of Ram to the Dandaka forest, his mother, Kausalya, prays to god. "May Agni, Vayu, Dharma and the sacred formulas taught by the Rishis, protect him (Rama) When he inadvertently comes into contact with the untouchables" (Ayodhya kanda chapter 25).

SACRIFICE: The sacrificing i.e. burning of useful things uselessly, is mentioned as a mentioned as a means of fulfilling all the desires. A number of birds and aquatic creatures were killed. In addition to them, three hundred animals and a fine horse were cut to pieces (Bala kanda ch. 14).

Keeping all these points in mind, one cannot respect the Ramayana. On the contrary, every sane person will invariably suggest that such a bundle of foolishness and irrationality must itself be sacrificed—thrown into a bon-fire, without accompaniment of vedic chantings for a change! Δ

Business Rajneesh Style

-Gopal, Madras

"Acharya" Rajneesh to whom may cine actors of Bombay had flocked seeking enlightenment has hit the headlines again. The high priest of a pseudo religious cult known for his permissiveness and unorthodox view on sex and superconsciousness had been fuming over the Government's ban on foreign units filming his Ashram near Poona. His acerbic tongue had lashed out at our Prime Minister calling him dimwitted, dullard and a spent cartridge. The cine guru could not have been half as critical of the establishment during Mrs. Gandhi's regime as he would have been put behind bars!

MONEY POWER

What is the secret power that has so emboldened the self-styled 'Acharya' (teacher) to hit out against the Establishment? Is it the imaginary strength of a self-centred megalomaniac or of a paranoid fostered on his hallucinations of others clenching their fists against him?

Or is it the power bestowed by a huge battalion of over 50,000 disciples around the world? Not really, for they aren't combat soldiers—most of them may just be dancing seminude trying to shed their inhibition by shedding their clothes.

It is possible that the money power is his real power; though success may also have gone to his head, as a former

disciple Mr. Vijay Anand of the Bombay film world felt.

THE CAR THAT COST 10 LAKHS

The balding "Bhagwan" sporting a flowing beard with strands of gray is a fabulously rich man. He had purchased a yellow Mercedes from the S I C for Rs. 10,45,000 out bidding top film stars! And this to cover a 100 yard distance from his room driven by a woman devotee. He all but finalised a deal to acquire a 1,000 acre complex in kutch to set up his Ashram.

The present Ashram itself is located in a palatial building with a brass-studded and richly carved gate. It has an extensive garden, and a library with 30,000 books. In the 'Buddha Hall' where he gives darshan he sits on a white tapestry upholstered executive swivel chair. A Bombay journalist found him wearing a "long sleeved turtle necked, polyester robe zipped up the back—The antithesis" indeed of Gandhi's loin cloth!

It is evident that all this display of opulence is in total contradistinction from the living standards of the majority of poor peasants not far away from Rajneesh's Poona Ashram, in the heart land of Maharashtra.

THE SNIFFING SANYASINS!

Rajneesh would have preferred a French perfume as he did an American car, but for his fear that it would bring an attack of Asthma. So before any one was ushered into his presence he or she would be given a "stiff-over" by two sanyasins.

So Rajneesh is indeed very human—as an asthmatic! This man who claimed that he communicated astrally reportedly refused to visit his Italian devotee who died after

being ill in a pune hospital. Rajneesh claimed it to be "God's will"—an escapist logic to convince his gullible disciples. It was as if to say, that but for the fact that God wanted the disciples death, Rajneesh would have saved her life!

WOOLING THE WESTERNERS: Most of the Rajneesh's followers are from the West. Only they—and not Indians—are allowed into 'Encounter' Group in the Ashram known for nude orgies and violence. There are other groups whose activities are relatively sober and meditative in nature.

Rajneesh's speeches are calculated to win over the large chunk of Westerners in his audience. He is felicitous in the use of Western idioms and is not averse to using four letter words. (Isn't Rajneesh's audience a fair cry from the British elite on the Ascot opening day whom Eliza Doolittle of Shaw's Pygmalion shocked by uttering a four lettered synonym to denote the horse Dover's desirer?).

Are Rajneesh's disciples any different from the Indian version of the Sanyasi? Not really. For the former two are given a 108-bead mala but told "The most religious place in the world today is not the Himalayas but California!". They are also given san-asa in a small room, ritualistically wearing saffron robes.

RAJNEESH'S PHILOSOPHY: Rajneesh reportedly wants one to shed the 'false individual separateness, the ego, so that the real self may emerge'.

Rajneesh—I feel—is probably right in speaking against sexual repression in the name of religion and godliness and in the name of our own moral mores and codes. But how far is his much publicised 'group therapy' a therapeutic exercise

of the mind? (And of the body—no, forgetting the psychosomatic connotations?). People are encouraged to freely let out their emotions. They are advised to 'let go' themselves to 'strip, yell obscenities, even act them out'. This is calculated to help one to shed one's inhibitions as he claims. The participants in these orgiastic explorations of the 'Encounter' Group after letting off their steam are later allowed to join more sober groups in the later stages of group therapy.

THE FALLACY: One does see reason in the principle of letting off steam. But then sex is a recurrent urge just like hunger or thirst. Does it also mean that one will need periodic sessions at the 'Encounter' group? For one will have to periodically repress some desires as long

Let Reason Prevail Upon Superstition

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as one lives within the social fabric as it exists today—and probably even in an alternative set up.

For example if a man feels attracted to a beautiful neighbour's wife, he cannot certainly propose to her and invite trouble. He will instead have to repress his own desires as long as he lives next door (and even otherwise, may be) and as long as he subscribes to the social mores and moral codes as reflected in the law of the land (however irrational they may be!).

CAN YOU ELOPE WITH YOUR NEIGHBOUR'S SPOUSE? In such cases as this and as long as all attractions are not platonic, there will have to be perpetual sexual repressions; may be one will have to live with them or give vent in a constructive or at least in a non-injurious manner. Not every one can. 'Let go' as Rajneesh advocates. It is reported that even the postmark on all the letters of his Ashram says 'let go'.

If you just 'let go' there will be no orderliness, but only chaos. Acharya Rajneesh encourages—"surrender to sensation; 'live life to the hilt, the only thing to renounce are your repressions. In the earlier instance, according to Rajneesh you can just elope with your neighbour's wife if you feel like it! You needn't even care for her own feelings in this. For even if she feels otherwise, you are still attracted and as long as you don't have her, you are forced to repress your feelings—which you shouldn't! The question here is—what happens when the feelings of the two do not concur? One of them will have to repress his or her urge. What happens to Rajneesh's theory then?

THE ACTOR'S VOLTE FACE: Vijay Anand nicknamed 'Goldie' a cine actor and director of Bombay was one of the most enthusiastic followers of Rajneesh. But he soon quit disenchanted and accu-

sed Rajneesh of using 'box-office' methods and playing upto his foreign disciples.

Rajneesh, he said, had advocated total obedience to the Guru who can do no wrong. This is irrational.

RELICS OF RAJNEESH: You may have heard of prophets' relics in Hasratbal mosque in Kashmir or Buddhas's tooth preserved in Kandy in Srilanka. But do you know that each Rajneesh centre in the world has either his toe nails or of his hair sealed in boxes? Even a towel which has cleansed his sweat is reportedly valued for its healing powers! A mould made of an alloy of five metals and destined to last for 5000 years produces silver casts of his feet. This is the blind worship that Rajneesh seems to advocate!

Not many devotees are fortunate to be among his closer disciples especially if they have a penchant for perfumes. Among his closest are 'Ma Yoga Vivek' and 'Ma Yoga Lakshmi'—two foreign women in high sounding sanscritic names!

THE SHREWD BUSINESSMAN: Rajneesh has reportedly said, "a poor country can only go communist. It is only the rich who have satisfied every other need, who seek out the highest need..."

No wonder he was trying to win Americans' sympathy from predominantly Western audiences.

Rajneesh is thus an opportunist and a shrewd business man. He reportedly charges Rs 10/- per day for a session for consultation. There are innumerable psychopathic followers who opt for the cure. They are made to stay on and on in the hope of eventual cure and salvation. They are fed on pseudo spiritual lectures and mulcted in every possible manner. And the Acharya feels on top of the world amidst his gullible Indian followers and sychophantic Westerners.

Soul and Rebirth

Ms Soma Sublok

The people who have not bothered to learn the rudiments of philosophy, raised objections on my article 'Soul and Rebirth', which appeared in Sarita (July 1, 1977). No wonder that glaring spelling mistakes were found in their letters. I was compelled to think that it was a lukewarm effort by uninformed people to claim pretentious knowledge in offering to discuss the subject.

I wrote, "soul cannot be omnipresent, for we see that neither all the persons feel appetite at one time and in the same quantity nor do they feel misery and joy simultaneously".

One reader has written that appetite and thirst are physiological phenomena. Soul has nothing to do with them and that every kind of action is due to Satva, Rajas and Tamas gunas. Soul is not concerned with these.

This statement is totally irrational and against the sastras that preach the theory of soul. If the soul is not concerned with the actions performed by physical body, how can the then take birth in the lower or higher species due to the bad or good actions done invariably by physical body?

THE CONCEPT OF SOUL

The hindu scriptures say that the man, who does bad deeds, takes birth into lower species and the doer of good deeds takes birth in higher species, when all the actions are

done by physical body and the body is destroyed after death; then who does take rebirth? According to the Sastras, the soul wanders and takes birth time and again. When the soul has no relation with the good or bad deeds done by the physical body then why does it take birth in the lower or higher species due to the result of the good or bad deeds by the physical body? What is the rationale behind this interaction of the formless soul and the physical deeds of the body when the two are claimed to be separate entities? How can any correlation between the two be justifiably explained by the irate critics of my article?

THE FALLACY OF THE EXAMPLE.

Nothing can be proved either by saying or by setting examples. As far as the existence of the soul is not proved, it is meaningless to compare it to the light of the sun or to the existence of the sky.

On what basis is it said that the soul is omnipresent? What is the proof for it? If merely by giving out an example it is attempted to prove that only one soul is omnipresent, then the very opposite to it can also be proved by saying that as only one potmaker cannot be present in all the pitchers of the world, in the same way only one soul cannot be present in all the things or creatures all over the world!

'OMNIPRESENCE' BUBBLE PRICKED!

Further omnipresent means 'present on all places' i.e. there is not a single place where that which is claimed to be omnipresent is not present. If we admit that there is something which is omnipresent, then only one thing can be so. Often God is said to be omnipresent. If, really, he is omnipresent, then nothing else can be so. The other thing can be omnipresent only

when there is any empty place. So, the soul is not omnipresent i.e. if god is omnipresent. The people who believe that soul is omnipresent will have to accept that either soul is omnipresent or the God. Both of them cannot be omnipresent at the same time.

If it is admitted that soul is omnipresent, then it cannot go out of the body. It will have to live in the corpse as well, for corpse is one of the whole things wherein the soul dwells. Nobody can die when these dwells something named soul, in the body. But the fact is that the man is dead! The sastras cry that the soul enters into another body after leaving the dead one. If at all the soul exists, it can not be omnipresent, for, to leave one place and to go to another place means the vacated places are not pervaded by the soul! How can it then be omnipresent?

GITA EXPOSED :

I did write, "It has been said in the Gita that Brahman and Jiva are one and the same thing, but in the soul we do not find the qualities attributed to the god."

One reader says that the 19th shloka of the 9th chapter as well as the 12th shloka of the 7th chapter of the Gita is the answer to the present objection. I have read both these shlokas. But there is nothing of the kind that may provide an answer to my earlier statement. In the two shlokas referred to it is written, "I am the burning sun: only I attract the rain, only I am that who is nectar, death sat, and Asat." Can it be provided from this statement which is paradoxical, that Brahman and the Jiva are one and same thing? Does any Jiva bring rain? In many countries, it does not rain for a long time and the people die of starvation owing to the shortage of wheat and rice etc. caused by the draught. Does there not

exist the soul, which, according to the Gita attracts rain?

What is the meaning of the saying—'I am the burning sun'? Does not the omnipresent soul live in the people in the snowy areas, where the snow falls for months and the people desire earnestly to see the rays of the sun? If the soul is the burning sun, and it necessarily dwells in living bodies, as the soulists declare, where is the need for the sun in winter and in the snowy areas? It is totally wrong to say that the soul and the god are both nectar and death and sat and Asat. The thing which is sat (true) which has essence and which has existence and which exists, can never be asat (untrue). If, both, the soul and the god are sat, these cannot be asat (untrue) at the same time. What can we get from the shlokas of the Gita referred to by the reader which in the same breath blows hot and cold by saying that one and the same thing is both sat and asat as well as living and dead?

It is a little surprising that the reader in his efforts to prove, the existence of the soul has denied the existence of the soul and that of the god by saying that they are Asat i.e. they are not real things!

THE SOULIST'S FAUX PAS :

This is not a proper argument to prove the existence of the soul. It is only a simple usage of the language. If the existence of soul is proved only by saying 'I', 'My' then what is the meaning of 'My' when it is said, 'My soul'? Hence this is only a way of saying something in the genitive case. The principle regarding the existence of soul cannot be proved for if 'My' denotes soul, then 'My soul' denotes that 'My' is something to which the soul belongs and hence not the soul itself! This contradicts the reader's argument. Secondly, if the 'My' denotes anything at

all, it denotes that the said soul not is the master in the body, but there is something else that is higher than the soul and incidentally the possessor of the latter. Thus both ways, the soul-ism dies its natural death.

One person says that the soul is omnipresent and everything that, comes in its connection, seems alive. I have already dealt on this fallacious concept of omnipresence of both soul and god and have also referred to the soul's 'vacating' of a dead body. Thus the omnipresence of the soul in the body, is merely a metaphysical quibble of the Idealists to hoodwink the people.

Merely quoting from the sastras cannot prove the existence of the soul. There is a lot of reflux in the sastras, as well, that confuses and contradicts. The person who gives up the dress becomes a rationalist unlike the others who follow the prejudices blindly and allow their thinking to be ossified.

IS KARMA THEORY AN UNFAILING LAW ?

Another person says that the human being faces the results of his earlier deeds in the present life and fruit of the deeds which he done in the last days of his present life, haunt him in the next birth. So, he takes rebirth.

This is not true. It is not necessary that every one faces the consequences of his deeds. It happens at times that the rich persons hire professional murders to murder their opponents. But they (the rich persons) do not get any punishment for their heinous deeds. Many a time, these professional murderers, also go scotfree. As these people do not reap the consequences of their bad deeds, many a time, the theory of karma fails. This being so it is a baseless supposition that the man takes rebirth to face the

consequences of the deeds done by him in the last days of his life. It is useless to say that the person faces the consequences of his deeds after death so long as the existence of rebirth cannot be proved by solid and unchallengeable proofs.

OR IS KARMA CONCEPT A DETERRENT ?

Another person opines, 'In the absence of the concept of rebirth, nobody would have hesitated to commit the crimes.'

The present society is a glowing proof to prove that the above said argument is wrong and baseless. In India, the Hindus who form about 85% of the total population, follow the theory of rebirth. But how many people are checked from committing crimes by this theory? Are the crimes such as thefts, decoities, pecuniary crimes, rapes, preplanned invasions on the so called harijans spurious drugs, adulteration in the eatables bribery etc., — not committed in India? If fear of the courts, police and imprisonment had not been there, the followers of the rebirth theory would not have hesitated to commit more such crimes! Therefore, it is totally wrong to say that had the rebirth not been there, people would have not hesitated to commit crimes.

CHILDREN WHO SPEAK OUT :

It is said in an effort to prove the rebirth theory that some children speak out the incidents of their "previous" lives.

But this plea again is untenable. The children who are five year old or above this age, are tutored to speak of their "previous" lives. The children much below that age group do not do so. If it is said that the child remember the incidents of his previous life, then we may say that the memory of the five year old child is the same as is that of the child who is below five. If later on

some supernatural thing comes to tell the happenings of the previous life that may come before the age of five as well. The scholars who had analysed the stories of previous birth told by children had concluded that it was a well conceived ruse and a humbug.

One Mr. Arvind from Patna wrote, 'he himself had known a baby who told about the previous life. But when the Sarita office asked him about the name and full address of the baby then Mr. Arvind replied, "I have not seen the baby myself. I read about it in the 'Kalyana' (a monthly in Hindi from Gorkhpur). You should enquire of the Kalyana". Now, the Kalyana had also said that we need not plough the fields and sow the seeds. A status of God Vishvakarma be placed in this fields and the crop itself will grow. How can we trust in the Kalyana?'

So then, the stories of 'previous' births, told by the children, are fraudulent and a way to earn easy money by hoodwinking the gullible people.

Secondly, the children who tell the stories regarding the so-called previous births, always think birth in the Hindi families of India, while the scriptures (ancient books) say that a person becomes human being only after taking birth in eighty four lacs of species. No child has ever said upto this day that in the previous birth he/she was a brose, an ass, a serpent, a mosquito, a fish or a crow.

Even if it is accepted that a person takes rebirth only from a human being, is it necessary that a hindu or previous life should take birth only in a Hindi family in India? Why does the soul of the people of America, Europe, Africa and Australia not take birth in India? Why does the soul not come in the house of a Muslim, a Christian or a jew speak other languages than the Hindus?

Naturally, the children can not be 'tutored' to speak an alien language!

An American research scholar in his book 'Spirits, Stars and Spells' (p. 246-249) has exposed some of the superstitious incidents regarding the rebirth and has proved that previous birth is merely a humbug.

SIZE OF THE 'SOUL'

A person has objected to my article and said that the size of the 'soul' has not been told in the upanishads.

It seems that he has not even touched the upanishads, not to speak of studying them. Owing to blind faith he wants to falsify the truth but the truth cannot be falsified this way. There is clearly written in the Katha upanishad (2/6/17) that the soul is equal to the 100th part of a single hair. Chhandogya Upanishad (3/1/14/2) says that soul is equal to a single piece of barley.

How meaningless and baseless this description of the soul is! These people do not distinguish among the sizes of a piece of barley, the hundredth part of a single hair and a thumb. But after measuring the soul, they attribute meaningless adjectives to it i.e. it is immortal and eternal. If the soul changes its shape and size how can it be eternal? These contradictions do not allow us to accept the existence of the soul.

One reader writes that the soul does not die. It changes the body as well change its clothes. This statement also does not prove the existence of the soul. It is said that the soul dwells in the body, when the body is destroyed, how is it that the thing that dwells in the body is not destroyed, the soul flies away and it leaves one garment of body and puts on a new one?

In fact the human body is made of crores of cells. These cells die and take birth

incestuously. As many cells are destroyed in a day, a person dies in the same proportion everyday. And the person remains dying until all the cells are destroyed. That being so, should we accept that the soul goes on changing the clothes time and again until all the cells die of a particular body?

If really there is any soul, most of it is necessarily saved when the cells die. It does not die totally. It means the soul increases when new cells are born and decreases when the cells die. Due to this fluctuation the soul cannot be said as immortal and eternal.

The cells of the human being or these of any other animate can be kept alive for some time out of the body. It is accepted by the soulists that soul is present in every body. The cells are independent bodies. That being so, there are crores of souls in one body or is there only one soul of the 'whole body' prevailing in all the cells?

DO LIVE SPERMS IN SEMEN HAVE SOUL?

Living beings take birth from the combination of egg of female with the living germs of the semen of male. There are crores of germ cells in a single drop of semen. When one of these living germ-cells enters into a fertile womb, the woman becomes pregnant. When more than one germ cells go in the fertile womb, according to the number of them, the children take birth.

This also proves that before coming into the womb of the mother, the 'soul' of the child is already present in the semen of his father. The soul of the child does not exist anywhere else. That being so, if it is also accepted that one living being has only one soul, then, how is it divided into crores of cells? Does the single 'master soul' of the father subdivide itself into crores of mini-souls one each for every one of countless

sperms every time the father secretes semen? And so too with the ovary of the mother? What happens when a single sperm fertilises an egg and the two become one? Does one 'mini-soul' lose its identity? And is every germ-cell has separate soul, how is it that there are crores of souls in one body? The argument thus becomes meaningless.

WHAT VEDAS SAY:

Some people while quoting from the Atharvaveda (5/1/13) and Rigveda (1/164/20) say that there is soul and rebirth in the vedas. Therefore, birth of these things should be accepted.

Only those people can blindly accept the things which are written in the vedas or in other 'holy' books, who are not free from the slavery of the sastras (ancient books) and who think that their sastras were prepared for them by god and he threw them down for Indians from the sky. But so long as these assumptions are not proved by scientific methods, we cannot accept anything as correct merely on the basis that it is written in this or that book. We also find many inaccuracies and nonsense in the sastras which can be accepted only by a semi-civilized or uncivilised people.

SOULISTS TALK OF INCEST

Some people write that if we do not accept soul, incest will prevail in the society. This argument can only be accepted by those who do not know the history of the followers of the soul. In the yam-yamisukta of the Rigveda (vide R.V. 10/10) we read a dialogue between the sister and the brother, who are the followers of the soul theory. In this sukta, the sister is compelling her brother for copulation with her. In Puranas it is written 'Vishnu married his mother' (vide Bhavishya Purana 4/18/27) Rigveda writes that the

father made his daughter pregnant (vide RV. 9/10/12) Puranas say that the moongod committed adultery with the wife of his Guru (vide Bhagvat Puranam P/14/2-14). Rama of the Dasarath Jataka (a Buddhist text) marries his sister sita. Swami Dayanad tells that the vedas allow a woman to copulate with eleven persons to get children and she can take permission from each of them for further intercourses with another set of eleven persons. In the R.V. (10/85/45) there is a verse which dictates | "o man, produce ten sons among the widows or married women". A woman is also exhorted to follow suit. As this verse was to be used everytime, when the Niyoga ceremony was performed, it is clear that everytime every man or woman automatically was granted eleven chances of sexual intercourse, de novo.

So it is totally wrong to say that sexual disorder will be created in the society if we do not accept the existence of soul. The materialists do not descend so low as the idealists can who believe in the soul which is 'immortal' and untouchable.

One person objects that the quotation which I have put from 'Savvaeksutt' proves the existence of soul; for, therein it is said that the followers of soul cannot get rid of the cycle of birth and death.

BUDDHA COUNTERS SOULIST HINDUS

This objection is baseless as the reader has evidently misunderstood the theory of the Buddha.

'The followers of the soul do not get rid of the cycle of birth and death,'—does not mean that one takes birth and dies repeatedly. But it means that the person who follows the theory of soul, psychologically remains disturbed, thinking about birth and death and does not lead the life peacefully. Buddha does not mean that the followers of soul take birth time and again. Buddha has used the word 'Nirvana' for emancipation and this 'Nirvana' is not a

thing to be achieved after death. It means only to rise above by following 'Ashtangik Marga (eight fold path)'. All this is related to the living being, not to the hereafter, to the fictitious soul. (Buddha and his Dharma by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar).

So, it is safe to say that the existence of the soul and the rebirth cannot be proved in any way, and as such can never be accepted by Rationalists. △

(The above is an abridged and free translation of the Author's own Hindi article published in 'Sarita'. The obscurantist forces instead of trying to challenge the veracity of the statements made by the author have chosen to prevail upon the obscurantist Government to launch prosecution proceedings against the Author, Editor and publisher. IRA and its affiliated Associations are doing their best to get the prosecution withdrawn. A few protest letters written from different quarters will be published in the next issue. —Ed.)

△

SECOND STUDY COURSE ON RATIONALISM

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Mr. C. A. Seshadri.

Course Organiser,

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CHILDREN'S CORNER

Hindu Scriptures Retold No. 3

Ms. Vasundhara

DHURUVA

King Uttanapada had two wives-Suniti, and his favourite, Suruchi. Once, when Suruchi's son Uttama was sitting on his father's lap, Suniti's son the five year old Dhruva eagerly tried to clamber up too. Suruchi felt her heart choke with jealousy and overflow with anger.

She shouted at Dhruva "Run to a forest and practise penance! You will please the 'Lord' Vishnu who will bless you. You will then be born again through me".

Poor Dhruva ran to his mother, "Mummy", he cried "Auntie asked me to do penance in a forest. But I am scared of the wild animals".

"Go my boy", his mother told him "Do as you are told. Only then can you hope for your father's favours".

So the tiny boy immediately journeyed into the jungle to begin practising a life of penance. There he sat, steady, unmovingconcentrating on the holy chant of Lord

Vishnu. "Hail Blessed One, Lord of the worlds, Hail".

When "Lord" Vishnu appeared, the innocent child could not find out words to speak.

Vishnu got a bit annoyed and shouted "Don't waste my time—I have other things to attend—tell me what do you want?" Dhruva briefly explained his predicament and requested Vishnu to do something in the matter.

Vishnu: "You stupid boy—instead of spending so many years on your penance, you could have fallen flat at the feet of your father and step mother and got their favours in no time. Sorry—I can't do anything in this. I am also helpless—go to hell".

Dhruva knew that if he went back home after such a long lapse of time his father was sure to take him to task. He went to the nearest river and drowned himself.

On hearing the sad news his mother went mad and started calling the brightest star she could see as her son "Dhruva". Other mad people around her and their offshoots followed suit. △

Guru-Sishya- No. 3

-By PONNU



Ladies First !

Going Up?

-by N. I. Chacko

(Published by the Author, The National Press, Tiruvalla, Kerala.
Rs. 8/- 183 pp Copies available with IRA)

"Unprovided with original learning, unfound in the habits of thinking, unskilled in the arts of composition, I resolved to write a book." This quotation from Edward Gibbon sets the tone of *Going-up?* by Ninan I. Chacko. A fellow-rationalist from whom we looked forward to reading more contributions in similar style in *FREETHOUGHT*, the author describes himself on the cover of his book as 'one out of the multitude of bolts and nuts—worn out and discarded—of the bureaucratic machinery in India'. He therefore wrote out of a lifetime of experience with the subtle intricacies of the power games people play, and the style of functioning of those many hopefuls who expect to be "going up"—a reference to "Uriyadi" in some Tamil temples where a man strives to climb a greased pole to secure a prize at the top while others spray him with jets of water to keep him from succeeding.

The book is addressed to the author's son and offers him advice on how to succeed since "old men are fond of giving good advice to console themselves for being no longer in a position to give bad examples," and "the secret of success is best known only to those who have not succeeded."

The book is retrieved from the malicousness that infects our humorous writing by its refreshing candour and good humour, and the author's irreverence regarding our institutions, our gods and our holy cows. He illustrates his points with an abundance of pertinent quotations from

many authors, ancient mythology and legends, and witty anecdotes and jokes. All the topics on which he tenders advice are familiar themes today of the rot and corruption that pervades our public life. Tongue in cheek, the author proceeds to point out the clear advantages of cheating, the wondrous power of money, the cultivation of powerful relatives and influential kin flattery and the ability to talk, the invaluable arts of *sifarish*, *tel malish* and *kakkapiditham* (or falling at the feet), of bribery and corruption and much else.

Two chapters strongly recommend that one should "Stick to Religion" and "Believe in the Occult." No other country in the world offers finer opportunities for self-aggrandisement and total worldly success than religion, so that "pedlars of spiritualism" like gurus and godmen can run flourishing export-import businesses in it.

Similarly, the practice of the occult places astrologers and their ilk far ahead of ordinary mortals, many of them wielding considerable power over politicians and ministers of government. Undoubtedly one of the shortest and quickest ways to the top is the cultivation of piety and a smattering knowledge of occult arts. To his regret the author confesses he himself was foolish in turning away from religion and therefore remained at the bottom. "The successful man is he who has combined the art of praying with the craft of preying," he says.

Going Up? is enjoyable reading and as a humorous book falls well within a genre of writing which is almost nonexistent in a country which has yet to learn to laugh at itself, and which lacks that healthy sense of balance which humour uses to effectively expose fraud, chicanery and human folly.

—Ms. M.R. Bhatti,



Test for Reason No. 18

IDENTIFY THE PARENTS

A, B and C are three friends married to L, M and N (Not in order). Each couple have a son. Their names are X, Y and Z. The following additional information is forwarded :

1. B married first of all, i.e. in February 1966, and A last, in September 1966.
2. L got married six months after M.
3. None of the children were born within a year of their parents' wedding.
4. N got her son exactly two years after marriage whereas L got one within 16 months of her marriage.
5. Z, who is the naughtiest, is January born.

6. X was born within 16 months of his parents' wedding, but not between August and January (both inclusive)

Who are X's parents ?

- RULES :**
1. The entries should be received on or before 24—3—79.
 2. There is a prize of Rs. 10 in the form of books to be sent to the winner. If there is more than one correct entry the prize will be divided equally.
 3. Readers are requested to quote their Membership Number or Subscription Number.

TEST FOR REASON No. 17

Since not even one correct solution has been received for Test for Reason Ho. 17, the last date for the same has been extended to 24—3—79.

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I, C. A. Seshadri, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date: 1—3—79

(Sd) C. A. SESHADRI
Signature of Publisher

An Acknowledgement and an Appeal

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The above sum of Rs. 1,484.80 is still very much less than Rs. 2,491.50 received during the year April 77 to March 78. As the financial year which is coming to a close on 31-3-79 is likely to end up in a deficit, all well wishes are requested to rush their generous donations by 31st March 1979.

Ms. S. V. VASUNDHRA,
Treasurer.

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